

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF
THE REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION OF GREENSBORO**

JUNE 24, 2003

SPECIAL MEETING

The Redevelopment Commission of Greensboro met in special meeting in The Stokes-Goldsborough Warehouse, 853 South Elm Street, Greensboro, North Carolina, on Tuesday, June 24, 2003 at 5:03 p.m. Present were Vice Chair Joe Wood, and Scott Lilly. Dan Curry and Caroline Wells represented the Housing and Community Development Department (HCD).

Vice Chair Wood called the meeting to order, introduced himself, and welcomed everyone to the special meeting. He asked that anyone who wished to speak to come up to the microphone, identify themselves, and give their address.

Rob Robinson stated that he was with Urban Development Associates (UDA) and they had held several meetings. He gave a slide presentation on design principles. They had been adhering to the goal-oriented approach. They had talked about developing guidelines to go along with this plan. If it is Commission property, it would be one thing; if there are private redevelopment efforts, this may be something the neighborhood in the long haul wants to implement so that when they have private and scattered infill lots, they are getting good quality and character of housing. He felt by using the principles discussed throughout this process, any proposal that comes in could be evaluated.

Chair Benjamin arrived at 5:14 p.m. and participated in the balance of the meeting.

Mr. Robinson said they were looking northwest of the site, looking at Southside in the foreground, and then looking at the larger parcels that the Commission controls in the north around the Nettie Coad Apartments. Then they went through priority initiatives. They started out with five, and in terms of spending time and energy on these initiatives, they are trying to winnow it down to three because they felt there were three that made the most sense.

Throughout the meeting, Commissioners asked questions as to specific areas and Mr. Robinson answered their inquiries.

Mr. Robinson said as MLK north is adjacent to Southside right at the north and then there is sort emerging Elm Street south where Ms. Wells has just gotten the Brownfields Grant with the idea of redeveloping all the way over to that corridor. They seem to be related initiatives and ought to plug into this as much as possible. They feel this will be sort of a mixed-use gateway to the City. There are a couple of infrastructure improvements they are suggesting here before they get into the plan. He explained these suggested

improvements.

Mr. Robinson said the scale was showing Southside and Ole Asheboro sort of melding together. Then the idea of mixing the commercial and residential along the edge would reflect the same scale that is on the other side of the bridge. As part of this, in front of the Nettie Coad Apartments, they have suggested that that is also a building that could handle some additional units and those could be built in the form of "wings" on either end of that school building. The lawn out front could then become more of a real park. It is now a nice landscape, but it is not really used. That would allow them to front more units and create another park off of MLK. It would give them the opportunity to create actually a second address in property that you own off of another little square.

Mr. Robinson said if you are standing south on MLK and you are looking north, then you can see the ramp as it comes off the street there so there is a pretty good gap there. Then right-hand side of the street is completely vacant. The people thought the scale should be much like what is happening at Southside. There has been discussion about whether it should be predominantly a type of townhouse image as you see in some of these, or a mix of the commercial image. He thought the live/work combination works pretty well here. We are getting neighborhood services back in south of the bridge, which is an important part of this.

Mr. Robinson said the way the report works, he was showing a page from it, and each of the initiatives can be pulled out as a separate section. If you are working on one, you have a discrete piece for that. He said they could sit and guess what the uses ought to be, but these may be developed incrementally. What they wanted to establish were some guidelines for setbacks and frontage on the streets and location of parking. It does not matter what your use is or what size your development is, but the pattern that you set up in here is sort of a regulating guideline for this.

Mr. Curry said one of the early objectives talked about was having a range of types of development offerings, having single offices or a group of small offices for small builders and larger parcels for larger builders and trying to have a range of opportunities here. The MLK north area probably would be the largest development package, if you want to package it. The opportunity is here to package a good piece of land together, either on both sides of MLK or maybe just on the left-hand side of MLK.

A short discussion was had on the land where the ramp is located, which was approximately 3-4 acres. It was pointed out that it would be good for the City to go ahead and put in what infrastructure was needed in this area to encourage more development.

Mr. Robinson said some of the plans showed parking from alleyways behind the structures. There would be some parking lots that you could not see, especially if some of the land were used for institutional uses, such as a community center or church. The strategy is to get that parking behind the buildings where it will not be seen from the street.

Ms. Robinson said the second initiative was Dorothy Brown Park. The idea is that we can make the park richer in a sense, because it gets landscaped so you get the sort of green quality down there, but there is really not enough frontage to make it a good neighborhood park. The question is: can you, keeping the walking trail, break this park down into two different parks tied together that have a little more character and quality and active uses.

Mr. Curry pointed out a page that staff would actually create as a development design standard for that particular piece of work. There are also some of the architectural standards information that could be given to potential builders.

Mr. Robinson said that they did not get a sense on the value of housing since it would be an evolutionary thing. Their sense was that you have existing in the neighborhood a lot of affordable housing for folks. One of the issues is how do you stabilize it so you are not subsidizing housing for the rest of time. If you can market housing adjacent to amenities, he thought they would start to see that value go up.

Mr. Robinson said the third one they had had a lot of discussion about was Douglas Park. This is one where they have talked about the active part of the park, which was sort in the slide being shown going from Douglas to Bragg. One of the discussions has been that this is a great park facility and is there a way to take advantage of a couple of the open edges for the park. He thought the jury was still out as to whether this was a good idea. One idea was could the park be a better address if you front it with houses. He pointed out some possible street connections and said this land getting redistributed as a series of neighborhood parks.

Mr. Robinson said the neighborhood did not want to lose any park space, and they would agree with that. However, they would agree with building very high quality park space that people can use. He thought that neighborhood parks that have good active uses are really better assets for the neighborhoods than a field that is sometimes used. If it were a regulation field and you were playing league sports, and everything was set up to accommodate that, he would say yes. But a field that is an incidental field that could sometimes throw the ball around in seemed to him to be a different thing that is taking up this much land than if you took that land a redistributed it into high quality neighborhood parks.

Mr. Wood said you could hear team managers talk about the lack of practice facilities. Where you might not need necessarily a regulation size site, if you have little kids who want to practice soccer or football or T-ball or something that doesn't need the full field, but part of it could be set aside for them.

Mr. Robinson said he thought that was a decision to be made here.

Carl Brower said that was something he had been talking with Parks & Recreation about as well as City staff about. They were totally against putting a street through that park. That street was closed back in the 1970s to enhance that park and enlarge the acreage of

that park.

Another speaker (Perry Coad) said he saw the pros and cons. A street runs adjacent to the park that balls go into and it is still a hazard. He had heard it said they wanted to maximize the use of a certain park. If you are going to expand the park where you can go into the other park area, he could see utilizing that park as a massive park. Other than that, he knew the trouble people had with having places to play. Right now, he had noticed some guys playing soccer were utilizing that field from time to time. The other side of the coin is the side he looks at the most, which is that the street runs along side of that park. To play any sports at that park presents a hazard.

Mr. Robinson said one of the things they wrestled with, and this is up for discussion, about what is the best thing for the neighborhood in the long run? One of the things was that when you have a park like this, which is pretty exquisite, is more or less a passive park. It does have some sports right down in the corner. When you line it with houses, you automatically use the park more and it becomes safer. Even though it is a street, this is a very typical situation for a neighborhood park. Mr. Robinson explained the concept of having smaller parks that would really be meant for smaller play, such as for toddlers and small children. You would lose field sports in this plan. You get great addresses for neighborhoods. They find that people love this scale of parks.

A discussion ensued as to green space, what would be used to parks for smaller children, streets that would be along these parks, and some of the other available land in the area, such as that owned by churches. There was also discussion as to how some of the land could be used for townhouses.

Mr. Robinson said this would be done on consensus. If there is no support or if you do not think that it adds enough value to what you are trying to do in the neighborhood redevelopment plan, it is not something you have to follow. We will back up and do another strategy. It is one of those areas though that he thought was very soft in the sense that it would be hard to get people to reinvest in a lot of this unless we add amenities that are visible from the very beginning.

In response to a question from Mr. Wood, Mr. Curry said that the basic structure of the plan would come to the Commission in a document that the Commission would be asked to review and act on. What staff is doing through this process is trying to figure out what that plan should show. The public meetings and the Planning Committee is doing is trying to figure out what consensus of the neighborhood is and directing UDA to then create that plan. He said the Commission would get an illustrative plan like this, but the Commission would also be getting a regulated plan that will say in this area, we want to create this type of environment with buildings fronting the street with a mix of uses.

In response to another question from Mr. Wood, Mr. Robinson said the principles for that site might be that you want to provide some kind of public open space for that. He preferred to see public open space were everybody could have access to it, now that it is

privatized for one exclusive group of people.

Mr. Robinson said that when you are building a neighborhood like this, you are really coming back to live in a community and the community is broad. To them it was, what do you do to create a stable, marketable neighborhood, and it seemed like, from a development perspective, it was more advantageous to the greater neighborhood to provide a series of definable amenities versus more practice fields or open-ended space. On the other hand, they can show Douglas Park continuing their ball field when you get houses facing it across the other side. That is another option.

Mr. Robinson said another thing that people had talked about at the public meeting was that over time, they had gotten the infill apartment buildings that had parking lots to the streets. He did not think that anyone felt that having rental housing was a bad thing over there, as long as it was well maintained and it added positively to the neighborhood. But when you start pulling houses out that used to face these streets and you put parking lots back on those lots, then you start to really change the character of the neighborhood. He did not think you could really mix it over here (indicating on the slide) unless in the long term you start to deal with these kinds of infill. He also explained some ideas for infill on Bennett and Reid. He pointed out some scattered sites on Julian to Ross for infill development.

Mr. Robinson said they did a whole series of neighborhood guidelines. One was dealing with community patterns, such as setbacks with lots if you are doing infill, with the idea of getting cars out of the front yard and pulling driveways into the back, making sure you keep houses in line with the houses that are beside them. He said the last part of this was primarily for houses. There was an interest here in keeping whatever happens new into one of the historic vocabularies or styles that you find in the entire neighborhood. He presented photographs of types of houses to which he was referring, including Colonial Revival, Craftsman and Victorian houses. He said there was a whole range of styles and types, and nothing precludes one-story development. They treated the whole plan as a series of initiatives, guidelines for infill sites, and then architectural guidelines.

There was then discussion and questions asked by participants and answered by Mr. Curry and Mr. Robinson.

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There being no further business before this special meeting, the meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Wells, Assistant Secretary
Greensboro Redevelopment Commission